

*Eng. Poetry vol. 54.*

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THE  
ART  
OF  
CONVERSING.

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[ Price ONE SHILLING. ]

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H T

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C. H. L. C.



C. H. L. C.

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*H. L'Isle Andre (y. m.)* THE

A R T

*Isle Andre (y. m.)* O F

C O N V E R S I N G.

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TRANSLATED from the FRENCH.

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Tho' without THIS I every Science knew,  
Much I might TALK, but not CONVERSE with you.

L O N D O N:

Printed for the Author, and sold by T. LEWIS, Ruffel-Street, Covent-  
Garden, and J. BEW, No. 28, Pater-noster-Row.

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M DCC LXXVII.



T H E

C O M V E R S I O N

I H A V E B E E N T H E F R E N C H



THEY TELL ME THAT I HAVE KNOWN  
MUCH OF THE TALK, BUT NOT CONVERSATION.

L O N D O N

Printed by the Author, 11, St. James's Street, London.  
Glasgow, 1841.



*To the RIGHT HONOURABLE the EARL of BUTE, KNIGHT COMPANION of the MOST NOBLE ORDER of the GARTER, &c. &c.*

*My Lord,*

*THE Design in publishing this little Piece, is to promote a Taste for rational, useful, and agreeable Conversation; and to furnish some plain and solid Rules for the Practice of an Art, highly interesting to all Ranks in Society.*

*Folly, Ignorance, and Frivolity have so debauched the Generality of the Nation; that Truth, and Reason can expect little Attention, unless supported by powerful Patronage, and Illustrious Example.*

*I have presumed, my Lord, to make Choice of You for the Patron. I can ground the Propriety of my Choice on the highest Authority, a Teste Meipso of our Gracious Sovereign, whose youthful Proficiency in this Art, (as in many other Arts) is owing to your Lordship's Talents. Your very Enemies bear Testimony, in an abusive Pamphlet published some Years since, where in a Note, I find the following Paragraphs—"His Talents very deservedly made him amiable to his young Master; his Morals were unexceptionable; and he was disposed to Arts, and Artists. He was in every Respect adapted to the Circle, &c." It is precisely in this Point of View, I look up to your Lordship; deign to patronize this little Performance; your Dignity and Example will insure to it the desired Success, I am*

*My Lord,*

*Your Lordship's*

*Most Respectful,*

*Most Obedient,*

*Humble Servant,*

*The TRANSLATOR.*

## Advertisement to the READER.

THE following Little Poem is translated from the French of a Pere André, Professor of Eloquence at Rouen in Normandy ; whose Posthumous Works were published a few Years ago in four Volumes.

The Translator has taken great Liberties with the Original, by Alterations, and Additions, in order to adapt it to the Genius of the English, and to the Ton of the present Times.

The Subject is certainly interesting : The Art if not lost, is certainly very much neglected among us. The Rules here given, are clear, concise, and comprehensive : But to produce the desired Effect, they must be studied, and practised assiduously : The Trouble, will be amply compensated by the great Advantages, the Reader will certainly reap from them. The Translators sole View is to promote, and facilitate the Attainment of these Advantages to his Countrymen. He has added a few Notes, which he hopes will be of Service to such as have not a Turn to Reflection : Those who have, will probably make better for themselves.

‘ Though the Translator calls this a Poem, he disclaims  
‘ all Pretension to the Title of Poet : And only, (as *Vol-*  
‘ *taire* says of *Buffier*) makes that Use of Verse (not Poetry)  
‘ for which it was originally intended : Namely, to imprint  
‘ on the Mind, such Things, as Men are desirous of re-  
‘ membering.’—*Catal. of French Writ.*



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T H E

# ART of CONVERSING.

**H**AIL conversation ! precious gift of heaven,  
And though no science, fairly worth the seven :  
By thee, the greatest blessing of mankind,  
Friendship, is form'd, cemented and refin'd :—  
In *this* we probe the human mind and heart,  
And in their pleasures, or their pains take part.

B

Learn

## N O T E S.

*Hail conversation !* ] We frequently use terms, without having an adequate idea in our mind ; often a false one. Perhaps an attentive perusal of this little poem will convince us that CONVERSATION is a term of this sort. Many will probably here learn, for the first time, that the end of conversation is the improvement of ourselves and others. That where this is not our view, we frustrate the design of our creator, dissipate our precious time, and abuse our faculties and talents.

*Friendship is formed,* ] Is not this term friendship often abused ? Here it signifies that sort, where virtue is the mutual view ; and reciprocal interest, both spiritual and temporal, the pursuit. This only is true friendship, and truly christian, with Mr. S. Jennings's leave.



Learn *here* its rules : the dictates of sound sense  
 Improv'd by prudence and benevolence.  
 Though, without these, I every science knew,  
 Much I might *talk*, but not converse with you.

The mind's interpreter, the tongue must be,  
 Your thoughts, and words let never disagree.

Adapt to every character your speech ;  
 When with the ignorant, keep within their reach :  
 Accompt the great with decent modesty :  
 Be with your equals, gay, and plain, and free.

Too scrupulous choice of words wou'd cramp the sense :  
 Yet risk no word, can give the least offence.

Whene'er

### N O T E.

*Much I might talk.* ] Empty chit-chat, and frivolous small-talk, by many abusedly called conversation, is, here formally excluded; and great-talk too, if I may be allowed the expression; for the fashionable topics, of horses, dogs, gaming, modes, scandal, &c. nay even politics, and religion, when introduced as subjects of the rash criticism, and malign censure of petulance and ignorance.

• Whene'er by chance, or choice, mix'd in the round  
 Of Company, first learn to know your ground.  
 Some coldly serious you will find ; some vain ;  
 Another often quite the Harlequin :  
 One strives to shine ; this with shrewd satire stuns :  
 This backbites all ; while others deal out puns :  
 Odd characters ! 'tis true ; yet still to each,  
 You nicely must accommodate your speech ;  
 Your very air, your tone of voice, your face ;  
 With due regard to age, rank, time and place.  
 Ask, answer, listen, condescend, and be  
 Convinc'd, when proper, dissent modestly :  
 Be complaisant in all ; but never so,  
 As to approve, what bad, or false you know :

A smile

### N O T E S.

*First learn to know your ground.* ] A nice attention to this rule, will prevent many improprieties ; and point out the way of rendering ourselves agreeable ; as the contrary conduct, and neglect of the following cautions, will make our character appear as odd, as any of the above-mentioned.

*What bad, or false* ] It is letting ourselves down very low to approve of what is really bad, or false ; if virtue does not prevail with us, let our pride at least support us ; it is perhaps a lesser evil.

A smile of mean connivance oft will loose  
A wretch's tongue, both God, and man to abuse.

Whate'er in life your rank, or station be,  
Act not the tyrant in your company :  
Freedom in converse is requir'd and ease,  
If *overbearing*, you will never please.

Dare be sincere, but prudence keep in view,  
By these directed always truth pursue ;  
Speak it out plainly, so it pleases best ;  
As beauty strikes us most, when least 'tis drest.

The sons of vanity, loquacious herd !  
Bring in dear self, at every other word.

*I saw*

#### N O T E S.

*A smile of mean connivance*] Though prudence in some circumstances withholds the direct censure ; yet morality and honour oblige us indispensibly to shew at least indirectly our disapprobation, where the honour of our maker, or our neighbour's reputation is injured. Our modern self-called philosophers will not relish this doctrine ; as it baulks them of the laugh and admiration they so eagerly court, at the expence of their religion, and their reason too.

*Speak it out plainly,*] Supposing it necessary, or useful, and no danger of even remote just offence.



*I* saw it, *I* was one, *I* told them so,  
Ay! that was *I*, *I* surely ought to know—  
Avoid this vice, destruction of all worth;  
For though the greatest hero, you on earth;  
This *I* alone, wou'd all your merit taint,  
Nay make a very devil of a saint.

The fool who grins at every thing that's said,  
By all is grinn'd at, when he turns his head.

Never affect to deal much in—bons mots,  
That trade belongs to fribbles, coxcombs, beaus.

Satire will please; too many love ill-nature;  
But hate the satirist, while they applaud the satire.

If much you railly, *I* suspect your heart,  
Fear you *I* may; admire, but hate your art.

Remember to avoid with studious care,  
The Pedant's gloom, and supercilious air:

C.

Against .

N O T E.

*This I alone,]* The least reflection on the disgust we feel at Egotism in others, will convince us, how disagreeable the practice of it must render ourselves.

Against our laws, 'tis always equal finning,  
Never to laugh, or always to be grinning.  
Observe in hot dispute with yonder fribble,  
That dogmatizing scavant fraught with quibble!  
Hot from his study, with stiff air and tone,  
He pesters you with science,— not his own.  
Thanks to his library, and not his wit,  
You've all that Locke, or Leibnitz ever writ.  
Don't contradict him, or he will distinguish,  
And sub-distinguish; and all sense extinguish.

He who talks much will void of sense be found;  
As empty vessels yield the loudest sound:  
Watch his discordant ideas, and soon  
You'll plainly see, the machine's out of tune.

While

N O T E.

*Never to laugh,*] As our faculties are given us to be exercised; our author is a better philosopher, than the noble Earl, who proscribes laughing in his letters. It is needless here to except the horse laugh, as the term speaks its brutality.



[ 7 ]

While others speak, be all attention you ;  
When 'tis your turn, be clear, your words but few.  
If too long-winded, you'll unkindly baulk  
Your neighbour, eager, as yourself, to talk.  
Let all be interested in what you tell,  
'Twill wake attention, tho' you don't excel :  
Never exhaust your subject, leave behind  
Some point, on which they may employ their mind.

To rise with dignity, descend with ease,  
Instruct while pleasing, by instruction please :  
From grave to pass with grace to gay, and then  
To change with equal ease to grave again :  
Happy the man, who's of these gifts possess'd ;  
Next happy they, who're with his converse blest'd !

Make

N O T E S.

*Be all attention* ] He who is not acquainted with the delicacy of self-love, must be very stupid, and knows very little of the world : he who shocks it, is not fit for society. Nothing perhaps gives more offence to self-love, than inattention to what we say ; it is a sure mark of ill-breeding, and often, of many worse qualities.

*Who are with his converse blest'd !* ] Conversation with persons of sense, virtue, learning and vivacity, is certainly the highest feast for a rational being.

How



[ 6 ]  
Make each one with himself content. and he,  
Will never fail to be content with thee,  
Nor envious him, nor jealous will you find,  
You've own'd his merit, he'll repay in kind :  
Mean flatt'ry tho', will never gain this end,  
Or ever make a man of sense your friend :  
He scorns you, when, your judgment to resign,  
He finds you ready ; sees thro' your design.

Who never contradicts, lets me to sleep:  
What profit from his converse can one reap?  
Polite disputes our faculties awake,  
As gentle breezes stir the dormant lake :

Strike

N O T E.

How humiliating is it, to such as know the human nature, and the importance of its destination, to see this pleasure so much disregarded ; and empty trifles, nay even brutal enjoyments, preferred by the generality of the species ? Some writers censure the women for not encouraging this kind of conversation ; and others blame them for discouraging it by their countenancing small talk. Their influence no doubt might be serviceable ; and their exerting it, would restore to their sex a dignity, at present somewhat impaired ; revive the power they are deemed so fond of ; now a little precarious ; and procure them an improvement, that would add a real value to those charms ; which, without it, rank them little higher than a Venus of Medicis, or an highly finished portrait of Vandyke or Reynolds.

Strike out the truth, before involv'd in dark,  
Thus flint, and steel excite the latent spark.  
But still great nicety's requir'd, and art,  
In all dispute to act a proper part.  
Be Reason always in debate your guide,  
Dare any combat with her on your side;  
But shou'd you ken her midst the hostile train,  
Strike instantaneous, to resist, is vain:  
Own your conviction, 'twill insure to you,  
Part of the glory, to the victor due.  
Harsh, or contemptuous terms, all scorn, or spite,  
Are poison'd weapons, not allow'd in fight:

D

Oft

N O T E S.

*To act a proper part.*] A general rule in all dispute, and indeed in all conversation, is, never to advance any thing that does not *appear* at least, clear to us, and to the purpose. We may be mistaken; but must then be open to conviction, nay desirous of it.

*Harsh, or contemptuous*] A sincere pursuit of truth however disagreeable, a diffidence of our judgment, which experience teaches us, to be oftener wrong, than right; a command of our passions: a consideration of the deference we exact from others: a view of the censure, and contempt we incur by abusive language, are infallible means of avoiding the dangers, we are here guarded against, and which are not imaginary ones.



Oft has the tenderest friendship chang'd to hate,  
From one rash word, flung out in hot debate :  
In vain the healing balsam is apply'd :  
The dart was poison'd, all is mortify'd.

Converse politely, affectation fly,  
Praise little, and blame less, bear Raillery.  
Bear raillery, you say ! yes, you must bear it ;  
It only hurts the weak, because they fear it :  
But *you*, good humour'd, join the laugh, nor be  
Too prompt to parry with tart repartee.

Damn'd to one point of view, the narrow mind,  
Can ne'er for conversation matter find :  
One set of ideas just, no, not one more ;  
When once you've heard him you have all his store :  
Campaigns are always Colonel Kill'em's topic ;  
Newton's attraction, that of Dr. Tropic.  
Oh ! sweet Variety, to thee we owe,  
Half of the pleasures we in converse know.

Wou'd

N O T E.

*Sweet variety—*] The sources of this variety is, the reading of improving books ; an habit of reflection, and observation of what is worth remark ; an



Wou'd you Perfection in this art attain?  
 Study one secret well, 'tis worth the pain;  
 The Secret is—with ease, but not by force,  
 To turn to worthy subjects the discourse.  
 The means? you ask: here take them, they are clear:  
 Set ev'ry one to talk within his sphere.  
 What regards commerce, merchants make explain;  
 The farmer tell the price, and growth of grain;  
 The judicious trav'ler many hints imparts,  
 Of men, and manners, climates, nature, arts:  
 Indulge the rich, on riches to descant;  
 The needy'll give good lessons upon want;  
 The foldier upon war: then questions chuse,  
 Which answered, may turn out to public use.

Thus

#### N O T E S.

abhorrence of frivolity and dissipation. The sterility of many, and the awkwardness they feel in rational converse, proceed from the defect of the fore-mentioned practice.—*N. B.* Many ladies, and a certain sort of gentlemen, are furnished with a variety of ideas from romances, novels, &c. and yet are at a loss in rational conversation; perhaps their ideas are not fit to communicate.

*To turn to worthy subjects* ] To do this aptly, and ingeniously, is one of the greatest perfections of conversation. He who executes it well, is an universal Benefactor.

Thus each ones merit, be it ne'er so small,  
Turns to account, and is of use to all.

Here, fain the muse with deference due would dare  
Offer, some hints peculiar to the fair.  
But Cards alas ! too much their thoughts employ,  
Curs'd cards ! the bane of ev'ry social joy.  
Direful invention of some demon's art !  
To debase the human mind, and spoil the heart :  
*That mind*, created to such noble ends,  
They turn aside from converse, duty, friends :  
*This heart*, for joys ecstatic form'd by heaven,  
Is damn'd to flutter at a Six, or Seven !  
Tell me, ye Fair ones, is it not a crime,  
To murder thus your best Friends, thought, and time ?

Yet

#### N O T E S.

*Curs'd cards*] Where cards are productive of the evils here enumerated, as they certainly often are; and of many, more grievous; no man or woman of sense, will hesitate to subscribe to this censure. Was ever man or woman of sense eager for cards, uneasy without them, neglectful of any duty for their sake? The ignorant, the avaricious, the indolent, the frivolous, the unthinking are fond of cards; though they dare not, perhaps often cannot, tell why?

*To murder thus*] Mr. Locke's opinion of cards, when a party was proposed, is an authority too trite, to need repeating; and too weighty to be refused: not



Yet, some there are who without Whist, or Loo,  
 Know to amuse themselves, and others too.  
 With such as these, you'll great resources find,  
 Both to improve, and to adorn your mind.  
 When you the pleasure of their converse share,  
 Approach them with respect, and decent air :  
 The sex claims deference from us as a duty ;  
 (Where there is no merit, pay it to—their beauty.)  
 From these you'll learn the graceful, and the fit ;  
 The choice of terms, the delicate in wit :  
 The point of goût, the method sure to please ;  
 The proper term of phrase, the decent ease ;  
 Elegant softness—But *here* draw a line,  
 Left to th' *effeminate* heedless you decline :

E

Be

## N O T E S.

that any great authority is necessary to convince us, that the precious advantages of rational thought, and time well apply'd, are ill exchanged for the futile pleasure of a card table, even supposing it free from the anxiety, ill humour, disappointments, and low bickerings which commonly attend it.

— *Yet some there are* ] Too few, we fear; yet enough, to shew the *many*, (if they would make the comparison) how inferior themselves are in the opinion of every man of sense: whose approbation, it may, for many reasons, behove them to court.

*Here draw a line,* ] As our Macaroni's deal very little in the sciences; no wonder they are not mathematicians enough to draw this line. A great deal of



Be on your guard, the proper bounds to fix ;  
 Never their foibles, with their graces mix :  
 Their frivolous small talk shun, and vanity ;  
 Passion for Bagatells, and Levity,  
 We can't suspect them, (it were too severe)  
 Of poisonous slander, or malicious sneer.

Immoral, and loose speech with care repress,  
 Our hearts are known, as harlots, by their dress.

The

N O T E S.

satire has been lavish'd on these Heteroclitcs; but they are too callous.—Alas can Sporus feel?—However it is of use to hang them out in terrorem to the growing generation, as the drunken slaves among the Athenians. The ladies are unjustly censured for extending their favour to these unworthies; it is sound policy: These Apostates give up the superiority of our sex, which always set uneasy on the other—and woman's passion for monks is an established right.

*We can't suspect them,* ] But we may suspect him of irony, I fear: however we must suppose he only speaks of French ladies, our English ones have better hearts.

*Immoral, and loose speech* ] Want of decency is want of sense—consequently every one who broaches, or prompts lewd discourse, is a fool. One should never look for this vulgar vice, but in the brothel, or night cellar: yet it is too often met with among people of fashion, or who pass for such; where lewd fallies, and obscene toasts circulate with the bottle. It was a shrewd observation of one, who said, he always suspected the virtue of the mother of any gentleman addicted to this infamous folly; and had often verified his suspicion by

The wretch insults his company, who dares  
Defile with lewd discourse, their modest ears;  
Shews plain, he thinks them all (what impudence!)  
Void, as himself of decency, and sense:  
Indeed he owns ('tis some extenuation)  
His own low-birth, or lower education.  
But base-begotten! if you bare the name  
Of injur'd fathers, spare your mother's shame.

If vice, or vicious act you must relate,  
Give it a turn, which may express your hate.

Speak, that I may see you, said an ancient wight  
To one, who silent stood; and he was right:  
By words, by even one, or gest, or tone,  
The speaker's heart is easy to be known.

Some

#### N O T E.

traditionary anecdotes of such Ladies, who had had their grooms, or Coachmen, for their gallants, the very year, these sons were born. Quere? If it were not a more pardonable insult to the company, if a man discharged the contents of his stomach on the table; than to defile their ears with the ordure of his obscene imaginations?



Some virtues praise so unfeelingly recite,  
You plainly see, 'tis not their heart's delight.  
Some against vice in others loud exclaim;  
But in themselves, excuse the very same.  
Wou'd you with love of virtue me inspire?  
And with the charms of moral beauty fire?  
Prove by your warm insinuating art,  
That what you teach, flows from both mind, and heart.

Monstrous the contrast! where are seen ally'd,  
The humble virtue, and the scornful pride:  
Vice seeks in vain to put on virtue's air,  
Sooner or later the cheat must appear:  
Bedeck a peasant in a Queen's array,  
Her aukward movements will the clown betray.  
So sure it is, spite of hypocrisy,  
Who wou'd always virtuous seem, must always virtuous be.

Let heart, and tongue be always in accord,  
One single spring must play the thought, and word.

In



In short—Be sensible in conversation ;  
 Something reserv'd, without dissimulation.

Benevolence sincere to all extend,  
 From honour's strictest rules dare never bend.

Stern reasoning, soft politeness let embellish ;  
 Add Attic salt enough to give a relish.

In every company have still in view,  
 To improve yourself, and profit others too :  
 That each retiring, in himself may say ;  
 I find my mind, and heart improv'd to-day.

F

N O T E.

*Something reserved, without dissimulation* ] A very different advice from the noble Earl's to his son ! Indeed most of the maxims in this little poem, are diametrically opposite to what his Lordship advances in his letters ; though it will scarce admit a doubt with any man of sense, virtue, or religion, which are best calculated for the good of society. Yet, shocking to think ! These letters have been put into the hands of our youth, by parents, guardians, &c. whom the laws would have hanged, if they had given their pupils a dose of arsenic. Which is most criminal, to poison the body, or the mind ?

F I N I S.

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 something received, without discrimination.  
 Benevolence extends to all extent;  
 From honor's highest place dare never bend.  
 Stern reasoning, self politicians let embellish;  
 Add Attie let enough to give a tollish.

In every company have still in view,  
 To improve yourself, and profit others too;  
 That each, resting, in himself may fly;  
 I find my mind, and I find my day.



W O R D

[A very different advice from the  
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P I N A